

Update from the Department of Early Learning February 2010

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

During this tough legislative session in Olympia, I am happy to report a bit of good news: Early learning seems to be on everyone's minds.

Walk down any hallway on the Capitol campus, and you're sure to hear intense conversation on the importance of quality early learning opportunities. And it's not only the "usual suspects" talking about our youngest learners: newspapers are editorializing about them, legislators are introducing bills addressing them, and parents and others are travelling to Olympia to testify.



In addition, last week I spoke to a group of business leaders on Bainbridge Island at a session arranged by United Ways of Washington. I left that discussion energized and optimistic. Business leaders around our state are increasingly convinced of the power of quality early learning opportunities.

So what does this mean? I take it as a very good sign that public awareness about a child's earliest years is growing. Brain research and economic data are supporting what we've long suspected: Investing in early learning works! Certainly how we prioritize early learning investments is an ongoing conversation, and people have many viewpoints on that issue. But the fact that early learning is a buzzword this session—even in the midst of a tough recession and many other policy issues on the table—shows that people in our state understand the importance of the earliest years.

You can follow the latest developments during legislative session on our Web site government relations section at www.del.wa.gov/government/legislature/

—Bette Hyde, Director

DEL, partners fund P-3 mini-grants

To support local efforts to ensure school readiness, DEL, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington are awarding "P-3 Partnership Implementation Grants" around the state.

The grants can be used to build upon or sustain community efforts in one of three areas: building early literacy skills, building early numeracy skills, and/or improving kindergarten transitions. School districts with current state-funded all-day kindergarten programs are eligible to apply, since these districts have likely already begun connecting their early learning and K-12 communities. Applicants must include in their partnerships at least one early learning provider and a local community organization.

"This is the first step in implementing a statewide early learning plan," said DEL Director Bette Hyde. "We want to enhance those local partnerships that are so essential to a statewide early learning system. If you get K-12 and early learning partners together in a room, good things happen for children and families."

For questions, e-mail janice.kelly@k12.wa.us



State health officer to parents: Get children second vaccine dose

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, no state has more than half of its children immunized against H1N1 influenza. Data shows that in Washington, up to 80 percent of children under age 10 have gotten their first doses of the vaccine, but are overdue for the second doses.

Washington State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes is reminding families with children under age 10 that to be fully protected from H1N1, children must receive both doses of the vaccine.

More information about H1N1 prevention and planning is available on the Department of Health Web site:

www.doh.wa.gov/h1n1/default.htm

and on DEL's Web site:

www.del.wa.gov/development/health/flu.aspx

Subsidy billing booklets coming

DEL is preparing updated booklets for licensed, certified and exempt in-home/relative caregivers with user-friendly information about how to bill for child care subsidy programs. The booklets will be available in English and Spanish, through your local child care resource and referral office or DEL.

"We want to make sure providers have the information they need about subsidies to properly bill and support families with children in their care," said DEL Assistant Director for Provider Partnerships Lynne Shanafelt.

Watch for more information about these booklets in the coming weeks.



If you have five minutes...

- Read DEL Director Bette Hyde and Thrive by Five Washington CEO Nina Auerbach's recent opinion piece on the draft Early Learning Plan in the Tacoma *News-Tribune*:
www.thenewstribune.com/opinion/regionalvoices/story/1041851.html
- Read the *Kitsap Sun*'s piece about Bette's recent presentation to business leaders at a United Way breakfast:
www.kitsapsun.com/news/2010/jan/28/former-bremerton-superintendent-talks-up-early/



DEL moves forward in state advisory council grant application

DEL has secured technical assistance and support from the National Governors Association and Zero to Three to help as we create our application for a federal State Advisory Council grant.

The grant is available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and Washington is eligible for up to \$1.5 million. The funding would be used to support the efforts of our Early Learning Advisory Council in strengthening early learning collaboration at the state and local levels.

To learn more about our efforts to secure this federal grant, visit www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/grant.aspx

Infant/toddler plan in the works

How can our state creatively invest economic stimulus funds for infant and toddlers, and look ahead to future spending for our state's youngest learners?

Those were the questions addressed at the "Infant Toddler Think Tank" on December 17, which DEL hosted in partnership with Thrive by Five Washington and the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program. DEL has about \$1.6 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funding for infant and toddler child care quality initiatives.

DEL is working this month to create an action and spending plan for these dollars, and to develop a theory of change about future infant/toddler initiatives based on the state early learning plan. Watch for more information soon!

Upcoming early learning events...

February 15 to 19—Learning for Life on KING 5

www.thrivebyfivewa.org

April 28 to 30—Infant and Early Childhood Conference

www.ieccwa.org

